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**Is the populist radical right (still) shaping the news?  
Media attention, issue ownership and  
party strategies in Switzerland**

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## **Abstract**

Populist radical right parties (PRR) arguably have benefited from high media attention, since their provocative (discursive) strategies largely fulfill the media logic. Once the PRR has established itself, however, there are fewer reasons to assume that media treatment should be much different compared to other mainstream parties. To shed light on this question, this paper aims, first, to show whether the PRR (still) finds large media attention and, second, to explain possible reasons for the amount of media attention. To this end, this paper includes an analysis of the 200 most salient communication events and issues in six Swiss newspapers from 2002 to 2009. Answers are provided as to whether political cleavages play a decisive role for the amount of media attention, or whether it is the interplay of strategies of political parties to acquire or reconfirm issue ownership and the media logic that favors populist issues and actors.

**Keywords:** Quantitative – Content Analysis; News, journalism; Populist radical right; party strategies; media logic

Parties of the populist radical right (here: PRR) are considered to be the “driving force of the current transformation of the Western European party systems” (Kriesi et al. 2008: 19). As partisan competition is moving in the direction of the cultural cleavage dimension (demarcation/protection) (Bornschiefer 2010), the populist radical right manages to increase the salience of “identity politics” (Betz/Johnson 2004) and acquire a clear profile and “issue ownership” in policy fields such as migration, which clearly distinguishes them from other (mainstream) parties. There are numerous reasons for this, among others the impact of de-nationalization and globalization (Kriesi et al. 2006). Taking into account the increasing mediation and mediatization of the political contest (Strömbäck 2008; Strömbäck/Esser 2009), especially Mazzoleni (2008b) but also Mudde (2004, 2007) have advanced the argument that the media have contributed to the success of the populist radical right. This is because the transformation of the media, seen for instance in the increase of scandalization, personalization and emotional ‘law and order’ issues (Blumler/Kavanagh 1999: 229), favors the populist radical right and its exclusionist, Manichean-like ideology (cf. Mudde 2007: 63ff.; Jagers/Walgrave 2007), its style and form of claims-making (e.g. polarizing statements, spectacular media strategies) and its internal structure (e.g. focus on one charismatic leader). In this way, it is the (albeit not necessarily intentional) “complicity” between “media populism” on the one hand and political populism on the other hand that heavily contributes to the overall success of the populist radical right (Mazzoleni 2008b: 50).

Most research so far has focused on the “ground-laying” and “insurgent phase” of the PRR (Mazzoleni 2008b). Here, the role of the media is claimed to be particularly relevant, as the PRR in these phases yet has to establish a reputation as a visible and effective actor in the political contest and as the media indeed contributed to the rise of the PRR by spreading anti-elitist sentiments and highlighting populist issues (Walgrave/de Swert 2004) and by

giving high attention to the strategies used by the PRR to attract the attention of the media (e.g. “aggressive tactics of discourse”, displaying a charismatic and media-savvy leaders etc.) (Plasser 2003: 37). What is largely missing in the literature, however, is an examination whether the populist radical right is indeed still finding large media attention in the “established” or “electoral persistence phase” and, if so, how one could explain this. In several Western European countries, populist radical right parties have established themselves in the political system and find continuous electoral support. This is markedly the case in Switzerland, one of the typical Western-style “consensus democracies” (Vatter 2008), where the right-wing populist SVP had its breakthrough in the 1990s, becoming the biggest party in 1999, but continues to carry victories both in elections and in popular votes.

From the point of the “media factor”, this needs to be explained. In the model of the interplay of media and political populism, especially the established phase is considered a “critical phase for populist movements” in terms of media coverage, as “the media tend to become disenchanted with them” and give populist parties and their leaders less spotlight than before (Mazzoleni 2008b: 61). The model, however, mainly refers to tabloid media, where the PRR has lost its appeal as an oppositional, rising challenger. Quality media, on the other hand, given their respectful or “sacerdotal” attitude towards established political actors, might now report more often than before the statements of the PRR, as it is considered politically relevant. Still, if the PRR becomes a ‘normal’ and legitimate party, it will be treated like any other mainstream party; thus, we would not expect an especially large media attention compared to other parties. As for possible regularities how political actors can dominate and ‘drive’ the news, expectations regarding the PRR’s media attention are therefore ambivalent. On the one hand, we know that it is mainly powerful and thus ‘relevant’ political actors who shape political news (Hänggli 2012) and manage to trigger political waves (Wolfsfeld/Sheafer 2006). This would benefit the PRR now that it is an established actor in comparison with earlier phases but not in comparison with other mainstream parties. On the other hand, it is mainly political actors with “charismatic communication skills” that manage to find attention during these waves (ibid.). This way, media attention is explained not necessarily with political power but with the (discursive) strategies political actors employ (e.g. focusing on a media-savvy leader). This again would benefit the PRR in comparison with other parties – provided that these parties do not moderate but retain their former provocative strategies and, even after joining the government, take the form of “movement parties” (Gunther/Diamond 2003), emphasizing their core issues again and successfully playing a “double game” of both government and opposition so highly attractive to the media (Geden 2006).

From these competing expectations and explanations, two questions follow: Does the populist radical right actually (still) enjoy high media attention? By addressing this question, this paper has a descriptive goal. Another goal, however, is to examine possible reasons for the amount of media attention: how could we relate the amount of media attention to the ideology and strategies of populist parties themselves and to the role of the media (media populism)? In this sense: is the populist radical right (still) shaping the news and how? To this end, we propose to measure media attention a) in various media types which display different degrees of “media logic” (Mazzoleni 2008a) and media populism and b) in several “communication events” (series of news reports), which are clustered around specific policy issues, institutional events or parties themselves. This way, we hope to find answers as to whether media populism, which is expected to be strongest in the tabloid media, leads to an

especially high attention of the PRR. We also examine whether media attention in a certain communication event could be considered as a result of an existing cleavage and the (successful) strategy of the PRR to acquire or defend the ownership over a certain issue, or whether the PRR chooses to claim new issues, if not trespass its political opponents' issues (cf. Walgrave et al. 2009).

We first turn to the context of this study, namely the case of Switzerland and its (dis)similarities with other political and media systems as well as the transformation of the public sphere, which leads to new media logic and new conditions under which certain political actors find more attention than before. Against the background of these opportunity structures the Swiss case provides, possible strategies of the PRR are discussed. We then introduce our methodology and framework for capturing media attention and the types of communication events and issues, issue ownership and strategies of political actors. Finally, we present our results, followed by a conclusion.

## **The populist radical right in a transformed public sphere in Switzerland**

### ***Political opportunity structures for the PRR in Switzerland***

The success of populist radical right parties is embedded in the general rise of a far right since the 1980s, taking different shape in different countries (Minkenberg 2003; Koopmans et al. 2005). Among these cases, Switzerland proves to be highly interesting. Against what is often assumed or claimed in the literature (for this point cf. Skenderovic 2009), Switzerland does enjoy high economic prosperity, a stable political system and a consensus mode of political culture, but there is a relatively high level of far-right activities. Betz (2004: 601-603) even argues that Switzerland is an archetypical example of a dramatic change in the political landscape with the impressive rise of Swiss People's Party (SVP), which transformed itself from a moderately conservative right-wing party with modest electoral success to a highly successful right-wing populist party (Mudde 2007; Kitschelt 2007: 1180; Kriesi et al. 2005). Taking into account the rise of the radical-right "Movement against over-foreignization" already in the 1960s, Skenderovic (2007: 164) claims that Switzerland might be even considered a "forerunner" in Western Europe.<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, there generally seem to be favorable political opportunity structures for the populist radical right, both regarding the institutional and the cultural context (cf. Mudde 2007: 232-248). *First*, there is a strong ideal of a culturally oriented Republican democracy since the birth of the Swiss nation-state in 1848, fostering populism and anti-elite sentiments (Imhof 2006a). *Second*, Swiss political culture shows a relatively high degree of

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<sup>1</sup> According to his analysis, it would be wrong to interpret the success of the far right in Switzerland as mainly a reaction to the "liberal" or social-democratic "hegemony" and as a fight against "post-materialist" values (cf. Kitschelt 1995; Ignazi 2003). For the radical right was a forerunner and gained a lot of importance already in the mid- and late 1960, i.e. *before* the rise of the New Left and later the Greens.

problematizing the 'Other' (such as "guest workers"), as the Swiss citizenship model lacks purely ethnic conceptions (e.g. language, race) and rather stresses 'softer' factors such as common cultural and political history or heritage, fostering nativism. One could also argue that these first two points can be linked to a tendency tapping into authoritarianism (Mudde 2007: 145), which means not only excluding those that are not part of this 'community' but also those that threaten the order, as order is considered the basis of freedom (e.g. calls for freedom to carry firearms but punishing crime). *Third*, specific political opportunity structures such as the institution of direct democracy enable also non-established political actors to conduct initiatives and referenda and break into the process routines of the political system or possibly overturn decisions made by the government or parliament (cf. also Albertazzi 2008; Skenderovic 2007: 171f.). This regularly increases media attention of those actors that use these direct-democratic means (Höglinger 2008). *Fourth*, the Swiss concordance system has become beneficial for populist actors because it tends to integrate rather than to fully ostracize political parties, especially since the SVP relied on its 'capital' as an old party participating in the government coalition since 1929. At the same time, concordance systems allow populist actors, even if they are in government, to stylize themselves as part of the opposition against the "political elite" which would always take (seemingly unnecessary) compromises. This is also because political parties take responsibility in government only for a specific sector without having to sign an encompassing coalition contract (Geden 2006: 129ff.), which facilitates playing down a party's contribution to government policies and putting the blame on "the government" (meaning "other" parties).

In this sense, Switzerland could even be called "yet another populist paradise" (Albertazzi 2008). Apart from these (specific) political opportunity structures, we believe that the Swiss case shares many developments with other Western-style democracies. It is especially the small democratic-corporatist states or consensus democracies (cf. Lijphart 1999) that have, like Switzerland, undergone fast transformations within relatively little time. These countries were shaped by a pillarized structure as late as the 1960s but then experienced a rapid erosion of milieus and profound changes on the degree and existence of political cleavages (cf. Kriesi et al. 2006) and polarization. Switzerland, in this process, has become more similar to these democracies, now constituting not an "extreme case" but "typical example" of consensus-democracy (Vatter 2008).

### ***Transformation of the public sphere***

Among the opportunity structures for the PRR, the media so far have received relatively little scholarly attention. This is surprising, as the media not only have come to shape how citizens learn about politics in the first place (mediation) but also given that the media have developed a novel way of selecting and portraying political issues and actors, leading political actors to adapt to the media (mediatization) (Strömbäck 2008). Also in these consensus democracies, a "new structural transformation of the public sphere" took place (Münch 1995; Imhof 2006b), meaning both the transformation of media structures and the conditions under which political actors can find attention in political communication, which then is reflected in media content (e.g. Hallin/Mancini 2004; Udris/Lucht 2011). On the level of media structures, the formerly dominating party papers ceased to exist or loosened their ties to political and intermediary actors (Imhof 2006b). At the same time, we do observe a growing commercialization of the media and the public sphere (Habermas 2006: 420-422).

This is reflected in an overall growing press concentration (reflecting a strategy to reduce uncertainty in complex markets) and in an overall increase of tabloid outlets, “free” commuter papers and TV programs that only partially focus on hard news, while the traditional daily press and high-quality news programs on PSB are declining (foeg 2011). In a comparative perspective, this process fits the development within the democratic-corporatist model in the second half of the twentieth century (Hallin/Mancini 2004). But it is noteworthy that small states like Switzerland and Austria within this model are ‘late starters’ and experience these changes later but more rapidly – and more so in the press sector, while the ‘big state’ Germany shares more characteristics with the liberal model in this respect (Udris/Lucht 2011). Thus, a lot changes in the Swiss media system within little time. Along with this transformation, the media stop addressing their social milieus or focus on citizen audiences in general, but they orient themselves towards consumer audiences (Bennett/Entman 2001; Brants/van Praag 2006). In this process, media content is increasingly shaped by “media logic” at the expense of a “political logic” (Strömbäck/Esler 2009). Focusing on the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and thus the established phase of the PRR, a recent large-scale study on actual media content in several news outlets in Switzerland shows that exactly those media types (online, commuter press, Sunday papers) are still rising that contribute relatively little to the quality of public debate. Compared to the declining PSB (both radio and television) and most regional or supra-regional dailies, they report substantially less on relevant political affairs both at home and abroad and much more on human interest, but also in political reporting they use a much more emotional or moralistic discourse, focus on persons rather than on structures, pick up scandalizing issues of ‘law and order’ and use much more episodic instead of thematic framing. Combining the results of media structures and supply, media use and media content, this means that more and more citizens are confronted with soft news (foeg 2011).

From this and relying on the findings in various Western democracies (e.g. Mazzoleni 2003; Albertazzi 2008; Mudde 2007: 248f.), we can conclude that this transformation of both media structures and media content also in Switzerland brings those conflicts and issues of identity politics and ‘law and order’ to the fore that foster the populist radical right in particular. Also, the charismatic appeal of leaders of populist radical-right parties and the sharp and taboo-breaking rhetoric of radical and populist actors that provokes strong reactions – they all fit the novel media logic (e.g. personalization, scandalization, dramatization of conflict) and thus manage to attract the attention of the mass media (Udris 2011: 170-172). In this respect, opportunity structures provided by the media are still favorable, and we would expect a continuously high media attention to the populist radical right – provided it keeps applying these strategies.

### ***Party strategies and issue ownership***

Needless to say, opportunities mean nothing if they are neither seized nor constantly created by the populist radical right. As there is a fertile breeding ground for anti-elitist and populist discourse and the problematization of the ‘Other’ (e.g. immigrants), it is a plausible and promising strategy for the PRR to constantly and actively (re)confirm an ownership over the immigration issue, other identity issues (e.g. Europe) and issues of ‘law and order’, especially when the “political elite” can be pitted against the “people”. Of course, any party could address these issues. The reason it makes special sense for the PRR to emphasize these is

because it fits the PRR's clear stance on the cultural dimension (integration/demarcation cleavage) and its Manichean-like core ideology (nativism, authoritarianism, populism) with strong exclusionist features (Mudde 2007: 293-294).

This is in line with the literature on "issue ownership", which suggests that it is beneficial to a party if it is associated in the media and the public with an issue the party itself promotes, enhancing the credibility in the party's competence to solve this issue (Walgrave et al. 2009; Walgrave/de Swert 2007) and leading to a clear profile and distinguishing the party from others, especially in a crowded competitive space that a multi-party system offers (Wagner 2011: 68). Parties therefore should "stick" to its core issues and see that the salience of these (few) core issues rise in the media, as this would give them considerable advantage over their political opponents (Iyengar/McGrady 2007: 142-144; Hänggli/Kriesi 2010). Empirically, it has repeatedly been shown that some parties are indeed associated with certain issues thanks to path-dependency resulting from longer-standing political cleavages (Kriesi et al. 2006) and attributions by the public.

However, as Walgrave/de Swert (2007) have shown, issue ownership is not exclusively the result of existing cleavages or a mere reflection of social class in a party's ideology. Especially if we take into account the fact that issue ownership is mainly (re)created in the political contest in the media, issue ownership then has a dynamic component. Although it takes time to change the ownership of an issue given the "track record" of a political party of this issue, parties can actually claim new issues or issues belonging to a political opponent. In this sense, emphasizing only its few core issues is not always the best option for a party. Especially when frames and issues of political opponents are considered (potentially) successful or important, there will be an incentive for a party to 'hijack' or 'trespass' the political opponent's issue (Sides 2006: 412; Ansolabehere/Iyengar 1994) and make an "oppositional emphasis choice" (Hänggli/Kriesi 2010; Hänggli/Kriesi 2012). One could also argue that, while sticking to the core issues aims at mobilizing the core constituency, emphasizing other and new issues will address a wider part of the electorate, another viable strategy in the struggle for votes. The risk of this strategy for a party, however, would be a vague profile, minimizing distinctiveness in relation to competitors.

These two strategies then, it seems, present clear trade-offs one way or the other. However, addressing new and more issues and still keeping a sharp profile might not stand in contrast. This is when a party is able to re-frame political opponents' issues, thus not sticking to its own issues any longer but still sticking to its own core messages and frames. When a populist radical-right party, usually focusing on immigration, starts to address budget policy, commonly associated with Liberal Democrats, it can still keep its sharp profile if it manages to re-frame budget policy as a conflict between the "political elite" allegedly abusing people's money and the PRR protecting the "people" against this 'loss of control'. Expanding the conflict by using taboo-breaking rhetoric and simple messages also helps the PRR to increase its media attention; apart from necessary visibility for the PRR, the dramatization of conflict by the media actually underlines the conflict line the party itself tries to stress. Interviews with party representatives of the SVP show (Geden 2006: 157) that this 'polarization', i.e. the SVP against the 'rest', plays into the hands of the party and is explicitly aimed at. Thus, the PRR constantly needs to use provocative strategies that, it hopes, would trigger those (negative) reactions from political opponents and the media which then reconfirms the political narrative of the PRR ('us against them'). Of course, this also requires both financial resources for this type of political marketing, and it requires certain knowledge

of how these resources are translated into effective political (campaign) strategies attractive to the media. At least for the point of financial resources, we know that the SVP is the party that by far invests most in political advertising: before popular votes, it invests twice as much as the three other big parties combined, and it also spends most during election campaigns (Herrmann 2012; foeg 2011).

## Hypotheses

In summary, we would expect the following:

Hypothesis 1a (H1a): Given the favorable political opportunity structures and the increasing media populism, the populist radical right (PRR) is expected to enjoy especially high media attention.

Hypothesis 1b (H1b): In the “established phase” of the PRR (the period examined in this paper), the PRR is treated like any other mainstream party. Thus, media attention to the PRR is not high compared to other political parties.

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): In order to keep a sharp profile and (re)confirm issue ownership most central to the ideological underpinning the PRR, the PRR emphasizes the issues of immigration, Europe, and issues of ‘law and order’ and thus finds especially large media attention in these fields.

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): In order both to address a wider part of the electorate and keep a sharp profile, the PRR ‘trespasses’ political opponents’ or new issues by applying its main frames to these issues, thus finding large media attention (also) in these issues.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Media populism favors political populism. Therefore, media types that are shaped more by media logic (e.g. tabloid press, Sunday papers) give more attention to moralistic-emotional (political) issues in news coverage, and they give more attention to the PRR in comparison with other media types (e.g. quality press, mid-market press).



## Methodology

### *Media agendas, media sample and media populism*

To capture media attention, we work with a large-scale database of Swiss media. This database captures news articles (including content) and their coding of “communication events”, i.e. series of news reports focusing on the same topic, actors and time dimension. The advantage to capture communication events is that they do more justice to how public communication is structured and how journalists (and media users) make sense of the world, as communication events can be in some cases concrete (single) events that produce no further communication (e.g. accident on the freeway), in other cases a shorter or longer series of events linked by the same actors, processes and time dimension (e.g. the “Clinton Lewinsky affair”, parliamentary elections in Switzerland in 2011, the Wimbledon tennis tournament in 2008) (Imhof 1993; Eisenegger 2005; Eisenegger et al. 2011).<sup>2</sup> On an inductive basis following the actual interpretative perspective of the journalists, each newspaper article in each edition is analyzed regarding whether it is part of an ongoing communication event or whether it builds a new communication event. In the database, each communication event receives a clear title indicating the actual topic, the main actors involved and the time frame. Also, each communication event is coded regarding a more abstract topic dimension capturing the relevance of news coverage such as ‘hard news’ (i.e. politics, economy, culture) and ‘soft news’ (i.e. sports, human interest). The actual salience of a communication event is measured with the number of articles; on this basis, media agendas can be analyzed.<sup>3</sup>

From this database, we choose the most salient, 200 communication events in the time range 2002 to 2009 in six newspapers in German-speaking Switzerland.<sup>4</sup> Interested in the political contest between Swiss parties, we look at only the 200 largest communication events with a domestic focus. We choose the time frame to capture the established phase of the PRR, which became the largest party in 1999. But we choose 2002 (and not 2000 or 2001) for two reasons. First, we tried to exclude 2001 for its ‘extraordinary’ character, with especially high attention to the events related to 9/11 but also regarding surprising domestic events such as the collapse of Switzerland’s biggest airline, a large accident in Switzerland’s longest car tunnel, and a shooting in a state assembly. Second, to guarantee a steady media sample of newspapers with high circulation, we chose April 2002 as the starting month, when

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<sup>2</sup> Note, for example, that an article on a press conference where a party presents its program for the upcoming elections receives its ‘meaning’ not by the fact that there is an event like a press conference – nor is it part of an abstract topic “elections in general” – but because it is part of a discussion about the *upcoming* elections.

<sup>3</sup> For the years 1910 onwards, three German-speaking newspapers were selected and the database includes the twenty largest communication events per newspaper and per year. From 1998 onwards, the database includes even more newspapers and also TV and radio programs, also from French-speaking Switzerland. It also includes all possible communication events, regardless their salience (i.e. also those smaller than the twenty largest communication events).

<sup>4</sup> We limit our analysis to German-speaking Switzerland for several reasons. First, it is by far the largest language region in Switzerland. Second, popular support for the SVP overall has become more similar in the three language regions, after they used to be much lower especially in the French-speaking and Italian-speaking part of Switzerland in the 1990s. Third, even though media are organized along the three language regions on the level of structures, media content analyses show that, at least for the most relevant political issues, the media in all three language regions tend to cover similar events and processes (Tresch 2008; foeg 2011).

the Sunday paper *NZZ am Sonntag* was launched. This way, we can include one daily and one Sunday paper from each of three media organizations. These papers are expected to be shaped by different degrees of media logic and media populism, here interpreted as a result of commercial pressures. This resulting media populism will be analyzed with two indicators. First, we look at the relevance of news coverage in the topic dimension, checking for each press type to what extent human interest and sport communication events are on the media agenda – arguably one of the most frequent indicators of ‘soft news’ in opposition to ‘relevant’ news coverage with ‘hard news’ dealing with “norms, goals, interests and activities related to the preparation, assertion, and implementation of authoritative, generally binding decisions about societal issues” (Reinemann et al. 2011: 17). Second, within news coverage on policy issues only, we look at the importance of all communication events dealing with identity politics and issues of law & order, as these types of issues better fit the media logic for their moralistic and emotional character. It is expected that, among the dailies, the *NZZ* as a quality paper displays the lowest and *Blick* as a tabloid daily the highest degree of this media logic, with the mid-market paper *Tages-Anzeiger* (Tamedia) falling in between. There is a similar hierarchy for the Sunday papers, as they ‘feed off’ the reputation of their sister papers, with the *NZZ am Sonntag* least shaped by the media logic and *SonntagsBlick* the most, with *SonntagsZeitung* (Tamedia) falling in between. But since Sunday papers (in the case of *NZZ am Sonntag* and *SonntagsZeitung*) experience more market pressures than dailies (higher reliance on street sales than on subscription; competition for the same nationwide audience compared to a more regional focus of the daily press), at least these two Sunday papers are expected to show slightly more indications of media logic than their daily counterparts.

All in all, our selected press agenda then takes into account different degrees of media logic and media populism, leading to a reasonably representative press agenda where we can observe the salience of (political) issues and the attention that political parties receive in the Swiss media arena. However, even with the inclusion of the traditional tabloids and the Sunday papers, one should note that this press agenda is still slightly biased towards hard news compared to the relatively high amount of soft news in the cost-free commuter papers, on news sites (mostly online portals of newspapers), on television and on private radio (cf. foeg 2011). Thus, should we find a high amount of soft news and news attractive to and shaped by populist actors on the selected press agenda, this would indicate an even higher amount on the overall media agenda in Switzerland.

### ***Media attention to parties***

Since each article is categorized and since the salience of communication events can be taken into account, we can work with a ‘meaningful’, relevant sample to measure media attention of political parties. Thus, we use this database with the selected 200 communication events and the according 75’351 news articles as a starting point from which we do a straightforward computerized search in the full text of these articles. With a keyword string capturing the five largest Swiss parties,<sup>5</sup> we count how many times a party (or a

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<sup>5</sup> For the analysis, we left out the youngest party, the Bourgeois-Democratic Party (BDP). Founded as a split-off of the SVP in 2008, it has one representative in the Federal Government (a former member of the SVP, who was excluded by the SVP), making it a highly relevant party. However, we decided to keep the party sample consistent for the whole time range (2002-2009).

representative of a party if his party affiliation is made explicit) is mentioned in the total of newspaper articles in each communication event. Two points are worth mentioning: a count was always binary, i.e. if a party (e.g. SVP) is mentioned in an article, this would count as one instance irrespective whether the party is mentioned only once or several times within this one article. Also, since each selected party is counted separately, this means that the actual number of instances (regarding party attention) could actually be higher than the total number of articles, as there could be up to five instances per article (five selected parties).

Of course, one has to be aware that this measurement results in fairly good chances for a party to be mentioned at all. If we bear in mind one of journalism's ideal of balance and fair treatment and the rise of "internal pluralism" at the expense of the formerly dominant "external pluralism", it should come as no surprise that journalists attempt to give all parties at least some chance to make their voices heard. Especially in election coverage, journalists try to be impartial and let all parties express their viewpoints (van Aelst/de Swert 2009). Thus, this measurement favors those actors that are mentioned just briefly at the expense of those actors that are the clear focus of an article. We can see this by using a subsample and comparing the automatic keyword search with an earlier analysis that relied on human coders.<sup>6</sup> Automatic keyword searches cannot account for specific journalistic routines (i.e. emphasizing certain actors in headlines and de-emphasizing other actors by quoting them only briefly) as well as human coders can. Therefore, possible differences between parties are leveled out in the automated keyword search to a certain degree. Overall, however, our method has the obvious advantage of being extremely time-efficient and allowing for necessary large media samples based on the most salient communication events and issues. Furthermore, in combination with the categorization of communication events (cf. below), this measurement of party attention in politically relevant and categorized articles is, we think, a good tool to show the issue ownership of political parties and their possible strategies to acquire or defend it.

### ***Linking parties' media attention to specific communication events and issues***

Needless to say, merely describing media attention of a political party overall does not answer what stands behind this media attention in communication events and how we can explain the dominance of a certain party in a certain issue field. To tackle this question, we first clustered the attention within a communication event to *types* of communication events. In the first group, we cluster communication events to different *policy issues* such as migration or education (cf. below). The second group consists of *institutional* communication

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<sup>6</sup> This concerns the coverage of the Parliamentary Elections 2007, where an earlier analysis relied on human coders and where up to five political actors were coded per article and each actor was coded with the weight within the article (main focus, slight focus, peripheral, 2288 items all in all). The automatic keyword sample gives the following numbers: 28% (SVP), 20.9% (SP), 20.1% (FDP), 18.4% (CVP), and 12.5% (GP). The values arising from human coders are: 41.1% (SVP), 18.1% (SP), 18% (FDP), 14.9% (CVP), and 7.9% (GP). The order of party attention remains exactly the same, but the differences among parties are more accentuated in the human coder procedure. Strikingly, these differences between these two procedures arise mainly from the fact that the SVP is by far the most dominant actor among those coded with "main focus", for example in headlines (48.7%), as the media often put more emphasis on the SVP than on other actors which also find attention in an article (e.g. the Greens, which receive only 6.5% among those actors in main focus). If we look only at those actors that are mentioned just briefly in an article (coded as peripheral), the values look much more than the values from the automatic keyword search.

events, and the third group of all communication events that focus on the goings-on of a *party* itself (party communication events). The reason we aggregate communication events into certain types of issues when we measure media attention is because we have different *expectations* of who could possibly have issue ownership of a certain issue, thus increasing media attention. In a next step, we then compare the (expected) issue ownership with the actual media attention, interpreting the (mis-)match as a result of political actors' strategies to confirm or acquire certain issue ownership. Combining expectations in issue ownership, types of communication events and actual media attention, we can come up with five points.

First, we look at a group of policy issues where *cleavage* theories lead to expectations that certain parties own certain issues and thus find most media attention in their own issues. In this case, a political party has made most claims according to its political program (visibility or standing) and is considered by others as the 'owner' of this issue and thus needs to be addressed (if not attacked) (resonance).<sup>7</sup> We therefore take into account categorizations used by researchers working with cleavage theories (e.g. Kriesi et al. 2008) and come up with categories indicating fields of contestation such as Army, Agriculture, Europe, Migration, etc. (cf. Table 2).<sup>8</sup> With regards to established conflict lines in the Swiss party system and the ideology and programs of political parties, we would expect the Social Democrats, for instance, to take the lead in issues regarding social security (e.g. health care reform, social security/maternity leave) The populist radical right is expected to (now) dominate issues in the field of identity politics such as migration (immigration), Europe, army etc. It also is expected to own issues evolving around questions of 'law and order' – but together with the Social Democrats as its antipode. The clearly repressive component tapping into the element of authoritarianism (Mudde 2007) on the one hand benefits the populist radical right. On the other hand, a prohibitive discourse focusing on injustice and victims (e.g. ban on smoking, ban on firearms) would favor the Social Democrats but also evoke strong reactions by the PRR using a populist "freedom" frame (e.g. "freedom" for citizens to carry firearms, against state intrusion). Of course, the PRR as a relatively new type of party first had to claim and take over all of these issues in its insurgent and breakthrough phase. Now that we focus on the established or persistence phase of the populist radical-right SVP, we are interested in the stabilizing and reconfirming of this acquired issue ownership (since the 1990s). If we look at communication events that focus on a specific policy issue and if the actual dominance of a party *matches* the expectations derived from cleavage theory, we would therefore interpret this as stable issue ownership.

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<sup>7</sup> Parties are not only just identified with certain issues, but they are also held to be the most competent to solve problems in this issue field (Walgrave/de Swert 2007). The data available unfortunately does not allow measuring the competence dimension, however. This dimension has to be dealt with in a qualitative way.

<sup>8</sup> The following categories are used that indicate fields of contestation (in alphabetical order): Army, Agriculture, Budget (question of finances), Culture (e.g. subsidies for the film industry), Economic Policy, Education, Energy, Environment, Ethics (e.g. euthanasia, stem cell research), Europe, Infrastructure (traffic, telecommunication etc.), 'law and order' (e.g. crime and moral deviance; prohibition of smoking, speed-driving, gun laws etc.), Media policy, Migration, Regulation Financial Sector (as the highly influential financial sector in Switzerland is clearly discussed separately from 'real' economy in public communication), Social Policy – Healthcare, Social Policy – Welfare, and Taxes (including questions of redistribution). Since we cannot measure individual claims and have to code on the level of the communication event, we can only partially account for the direction of claims-making on a certain conflict dimension (e.g. economic axis: question of more or less deregulation).

Second, we also bear in mind that issue ownership is mainly (re)created in the political contest in the media. Issue ownership has a dynamic component (Walgrave/de Swert 2007), and parties can actually claim new issues or issues belonging to a political opponent. If the actual dominance of a party does not match the expectation derived from *cleavage theory*, we would consider this '*mismatch*' as a result of "*trespassing*" or, in more colloquial terms, of "riding the wave" (Sides 2006: 412; Ansolabehere/Iyengar 1994; Hänggli/Kriesi 2010). In this case, another party would have found most media attention in a field that, we would expect, 'belongs' to a political opponent.

Third, we have to be aware that, apart from these cases of more or less stable issue ownership or "trespassing", there are several communication events and issues where *no specific issue ownership* can be expected in the first place. This applies to '*new*' or *heterogeneous, contested policy issues*. As Walgrave et al. (2009: 155f.) argue, we can generally observe a multitude of "free-floating" issues in multi-party systems such as Belgium or Switzerland, as the erosion of social milieus and the erosion or decline of some cleavages brings new issues to the fore (e.g. by non-parliamentary actors) that first need to be *claimed* by political parties. Also, the multi-party competition increases the likelihood that parties constantly try to take over issues from their closest competitors if these issues are not (yet) entrenched in the political contest. In light of this: who, for instance, is expected to own a contested issue such as education? This heterogeneous field can include questions ranging from welfare (e.g. financial support for parents that send their children to daycare schools, favoring the Social Democrats) to budget (favoring the Liberal Democrats) or, even, immigration (e.g. complaining about the number of immigrants' children in schools, favoring the SVP).

Fourth, *no automatic issue ownership* can be assumed in *institutional* communication events. *Parliamentary elections* as such are "free-floating" issues or communication events, as election coverage includes claims for a whole variety of issue fields which are merged and combined in news articles. Parties' goals are to achieve maximum resonance in the election coverage, for example by emphasizing 'their' issue (e.g. welfare in the case of the Social Democrats etc.) *within* election coverage. Another type where no issue ownership can be assumed concerns *executive elections*, especially on the national level.<sup>9</sup> True, media attention also reflects whose seat is at stake (e.g. Social Democrats defending their own seat). But for a political party, *claiming* a seat that does not 'belong' to it may violate the implicit consensus code but has other advantages. This way, a party can show its supporters that it fights for their constituents' representation in the government (increasing credibility and efficacy) and, importantly, it guarantees media attention, as the media in their increasing focus on the 'horse race' of executive elections (not knowing who in the end might actually win) give these claimants also attention. Finally, communication events focusing on the reform of institutions or the *critique of institutions*, such as revising the constitution, scandals about the federal prosecutor etc. do not constitute issues automatically owned by a party, and the more a party finds attention in this issue field, the more it would also claim it.

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<sup>9</sup> In Switzerland, the executive, consisting of seven members, is elected by Parliament every four years and for a time-span of four years, in the first session of the 'new' Parliament, i.e. after Parliamentary Elections. Parliament has no right to 'vote off' a member of government during the legislative period. Each office-holder, however, has the right to step down also during this period. In this case, Parliament elects a new member of government, usually, following an implicit agreement about the proportion of party seats in the government, voting for the candidate from the same party as the exiting Councilor.

*Fifth*, we can observe *party communication events* that directly *focus* on parties themselves (e.g. internal struggle in a party after an electoral defeat etc.). The dominance of the according party is obvious. More interestingly, however, we can see to what extent one party communication event finds attention in the overall media agenda while a communication event on another party does not. Are the internal workings and strategies of the SVP part of the top 200 communication events, while those within the Green Party are not? Also, we can examine more thoroughly why a certain party and the according party issue come into focus. Even though parties generally might attempt to receive as much attention as possible, a media focus on the party itself is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it increases the visibility and thus the relevance of the party. On the other hand, this is favorable for a party only if the media (and other actors) finally contribute to an image of the party as a cohesive, effective and credible political actor.

Before we turn to the results, two possible points of criticism have to be addressed when it comes to the method used in this paper: The first one would probably focus on whether media attention as seen in media content can say anything at all about the actual intentions and strategies of political actors. Comparing media data with party manifestos, expert surveys and population surveys for the salience of issues, Helbling/Tresch (2011: 180-181), for instance, argue that the media accurately depict the actual positions of political parties, but the salience of issues is different in the media than in the other three types of data, indicating a media selection bias. Furthermore, when interpreting media attention of a party, one has to consider that attention can mean that an actor has a voice or a *standing* in the public sphere, meaning the actor is *visible and active* (at least in some way), or it can be *resonance* in the sense that the media and other actors *react* to or deal with the message of this actor, thus carrying the message even further (Koopmans 2004; Ferree et al. 2002). One shortcoming of this present study is that it cannot systematically analyze this distinction: it only captures media attention in general and not the type of attention that would give more insights into possible party strategies. So, theoretically, high attention for a party could result from strong standing only, perfectly mirroring the actual input of political parties, or it could result from strong reactions only, with the media and other actors linking a party with an issue that party actually never addresses.

However, these possible media ‘distortion’ effects vary considerably regarding the length of the time period examined. If we considered only a short period (e.g. one campaign), our method would be problematic. Indeed, research suggests that media data diverge most from party manifestos (as proxies of party communication) exactly during shorter periods, for example during election campaigns (Helbling/Tresch 2011). Also, the media contribute to issue ownership in a different way than party communications, with (older) party manifestos having more long-term and with the media having more short-term effects on how people connect parties with certain issues (Walgrave/de Swert 2007). Thus, in order to reach a higher congruent validity between media data and party communication data, media data has to stretch over a long time period. In our method, the selected time range of seven years is not perfect but, we argue, long enough to assume that at least both types of attention, meaning visibility and resonance, are at play. First, even if one suggests that the media and other political actors mainly focused on the SVP (passive role, resonance), media attention still would have to be a reaction to at least some sort of input and standing of the SVP itself during these seven years (active role) – otherwise, these reactions for seven years without any actions made by the party would not make sense. Second, arguing that media attention

merely reflects visibility and an active role would ignore the empirical fact that political actors indeed explicitly react to the input of their opponents and address them, whether one interprets this as a case of true dialogue and deliberation or whether political actors react to their opponents' frames and arguments merely for their own advantage (Hänggli/Kriesi 2012). Thus, we can interpret media attention for this longer time-range as a combination of standing and resonance and a combination of an active and passive role. Of course, in order to understand the actual mechanisms in the strategic contest better, this paper is only a first step, and more qualitative (case) studies are needed and welcome.

Another criticism might state that the attention merely reflects the relevance of political parties resulting from the actual *vote share*. This derives from the fact that media tend to give attention to powerful actors, as they are considered more relevant than non-established actors (Wolfsfeld 2011: 9-22).<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the SVP is the party with the largest vote share, and the Green Party is the smallest out of the five parties examined – an overall high media attention to the SVP and less attention to the Green Party might not be surprising from this perspective. But two brief points could be said against this interpretation: First, the vote share and thus the electoral appeal itself are not self-evident. Especially if a party increases its vote share in relatively short time, as the SVP did during the 1990s and 2000s, the vote share becomes an explanandum instead of an explanans. Second, how would one explain the fact that a party is extremely visible in some communication events while it receives only little attention in others? All this points to at least some degree of specific activities by political actors in the struggle for media attention.

To sum up, we capture the most salient 200 communication events with a domestic focus in six newspapers. All political communication events are then clustered or coded, respectively, as institutional communication events, party communication events and the various types of policy issues. In addition, we indicate which issue ownership is expected for each type of issue. Finally, in all these clustered political communication events and issues, we count the according media attention of the five largest Swiss parties. When displaying the results below, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) as a representative of the PRR deserves special observation in view of the focus of this paper.

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<sup>10</sup> Another possible intervening factor for a party's high media attention, which also taps onto the news value of relevance, is the *involvement of a party's office-holders* in the national (or cantonal) government. Analyses for the Swiss case have shown that ministers in particular enjoy considerable media attention (Hänggli 2012). However, the media in a lot of cases do not make a minister's party affiliation transparent in each article but rather indicate the title of the office (e.g. "Federal Councilor Micheline Calmy-Rey" instead of "Social Democratic Federal Councilor Calmy-Rey"). Also, it is doubtful that all the actions of a Federal Councilor bear upon the attention and, above all, reputation of "his" or "her" party. Therefore, the keyword search for parties did not include the federal councilors or other office-holders of a party if they were not mentioned with their party affiliation.

## Results: Media attention to the populist radical right and its issues

### *Media attention to the populist radical right*

Table 1 captures the media attention to political parties in 200 communication events in six German-speaking newspapers from 2002 to 2009, which consist of 75'351 news articles. Just looking at the number of instances (i.e. when a party was mentioned in an article) compared to the overall 59'553 instances, it becomes obvious that the populist radical right SVP is the party that receives most media attention: Out of the five parties selected, it receives 28.4%, whereas the Liberal Democrats (FDP) receive 23.0%, the Social Democrats 22.9%, the Christian Democrats (CVP) 17.3%, and the Green Party (GP) 8.3%.

**Table 1: Media attention to political parties**

	<b>SVP</b>	<b>SP</b>	<b>FDP</b>	<b>CVP</b>	<b>GP</b>	<b>Total</b>
<hr/>						
<b>Media attention</b>						
Share (%)	28.4%	22.9%	23.0%	17.3%	8.3%	100.0%
Number of instances	16938	13665	13716	10313	4921	59553

These findings then lend support to H1a: favorable opportunity structures and the increasing media populism award the PRR especially high media attention (even) in its established phase. Thus, the PRR is (still) able to shape the news. The expectation that the PRR has come to be treated just like any other mainstream party and will not find especially large attention (H1b) seems less plausible in view of these findings.

### *Media attention: issue ownership and party strategies*

In the remainder of this section, we now deal with the *types* of communication events and thus possible explanations for where parties hold and reconfirm issue ownership, trespass an opponent's issue or claim new or free-floating issues. Table 2 clusters these communication events into broader issues and shows the party attention for each type of communication event or issue. We use two complementary perspectives to interpret and display the findings. Interested in the interparty competition (share of attention), we display the *dominant* party with grey shades, meaning the party that receives most media attention in an issue field compared to its competitors. This party then is seen to (currently) hold ownership over this issue. Apart from displaying media attention, we also calculated the *emphasis* with which a party receives attention in an issue field compared to a party's overall attention. (In the issue field of migration, for instance, the SVP receives 44% of media attention. Compared to the average attention to the SVP – 28.4% –, there is an emphasis on media attention to the SVP in this field, as this attention is 1.5 times higher.) In bold types, we display the party with the highest emphasis in an issue field. This allows us to see whether media attention to a party is restricted to (its core) few issues or whether it is spread out on a broad range of issues.



The result of this analysis is striking. As Table 2 shows, the SVP is the dominant party in the majority of issue types. It dominates all issue types which could be labeled as 'identity politics' (Migration, Europe, Army) or 'law & order'.<sup>11</sup> Also, the attention to the SVP is particularly high in these issue fields, as the high emphasis values show. As this fits the ideology of the SVP and since it achieved this ownership in the course of the 1990s, this seems to be a case of (at least partially) *stable issue ownership*. To put it differently: by constantly bringing these issues to the fore, the SVP manages to reconfirm its ownership over these issues. This lends support to hypothesis H2a. Apart from the SVP, there is at least partially stable issue ownership in the case of the Social Democrats stressing their issues (welfare, healthcare, culture, regulation of the financial sector). There also is (partially) stable issue ownership in the case the Christian Democrats, which find most attention in ethical discussions (such as abortion). At the same time, as a relatively old and centrist "people's party", the CVP works with a broad spectrum of issues and hardly emphasizes any issues. The same is true for the Liberal Democrats. Furthermore, in view of the constantly sinking vote share of the Liberal Democrats, it is telling that this "founding party" of the Swiss nation-state no longer manages to confirm ownership of its issues (e.g. budget), and, in the only field it really emphasizes and where it tries to trespass (i.e. environment), this is to a large extent to its disadvantage.<sup>12</sup> Finally, it is not surprising to see a relatively high attention to the Green Party in the fields of energy (e.g. nuclear power) and environment (e.g. climate change). As a small party not involved in the government, the Greens do not dominate these discussions but the high emphasis value show that, if the Greens find media attention, it is mainly in these issues. The very different emphasis values for the Green Party also indicates that the party, unlike the SVP, concentrates on few issues, which is in line with findings on higher policy differentiation for small parties (Wagner 2011).

### **[Table 2 around here]**

While party attention in some issue fields does confirm the salience of (established) conflict lines and cleavages, what happens in the case of free-floating issues or when the actual ownership does not match the expectations (trespassing)? Again, the SVP proves to be the dominant actor, as it claims most attention in various institutional communication events and in various policy fields, more so than the Social Democrats. The SVP does emphasize two out these issue fields (critique of institutions; education). But even in the cases of other issues with less emphasis (compared to the issues of immigration, Europe or the army) such as budget, taxes or media policy, the SVP still is the party that (now) seems to be most associated with these issues. Taken together, we could conclude that the SVP indeed puts special weight on its core issues such as immigration and Europe, supporting hypothesis 2a, but it does not stick to these two issues. In this sense, hypothesis 2b is also supported. This seeming contradiction between keeping a sharp profile (focusing on core issues) and losing it

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<sup>11</sup> The dominance in the field of agriculture also stems from the early roots of the SVP, which started as an agrarian party.

<sup>12</sup> This is because the salient initiative launched by the FDP, which demanded the suspension of the (automatic) veto right for environmental NGOs and stressed more economy-friendly environmental policies (e.g. solar energy), fared extremely poorly at the polls. The initiative did not even find unanimous support within the FDP itself, leading to news coverage that painted a picture of an unsuccessful party lacking a coherent strategy.

(claiming new issues) could be resolved, however, if we understand this claiming of new issues as a strategy to expand the scope of these core messages. That is, the party sticks to its core messages when dealing with (other) issues. One reason this strategy seems to work is because of both of the simplicity and the flexibility of populist ideology and discourse. No doubt, the SVP uses a form of “thick populism” (Jagers/Walgrave 2007), which consists both of a strong “anti-establishment” (vertical) and an exclusionist (horizontal) discourse (Geden 2006). With this rigid boundary-setting, it is powerful enough to explain difficult problems with simple causal mechanisms, and at the same time, populism as a “thin-centered ideology” is flexible enough to be applied to other issue fields.

This can be seen in the case of economic issues which are (now) are associated with the SVP. In the field of *budget*, for instance, the SVP ‘trespasses’ a traditional domain of the Liberal Democrats and most successfully finds attention with its strongest criticism of “socialist” state intervention and the clearest claims to reduce the state budget and cut down public administration which allegedly was in the hands of left-wing bureaucrats. This rhetoric might serve to attract voters in favor of deregulation, indicating elements of neoliberalism. However, since neoliberalism is only secondary in the ideology of the PRR and since it is mainly instrumentalized for the primary agenda of the PRR, it is often combined with elements of welfare-state chauvinism (Mudde 2007: 136-137). In our data, we can see this in the high attention to the SVP also in other economic issues. Similarly fitting into this type of populist discourse, the SVP is most visible in the most salient *tax* and redistribution issues, as the party not only frames redistribution in vertical terms but also in horizontal terms (Swiss vs. foreigners). The party, for instance, launched a highly publicized initiative to block the plan that the Swiss National Bank give some of its extra revenues from gold to a “solidarity” foundation which would, among others, support young and poor people not only in Switzerland but also abroad.

Apart from claiming or trespassing economic issues, the SVP manages to capture even more free-floating issues, again using its core populist messages. In *media policy*, the SVP regularly attacks the “mainstream liberal” media and asks for a fundamental reform of public service broadcasting. This is not surprising given that the PRR considers the media as hostile and part of the “political elite” and incorporates this criticism into its basic populist narrative (Mazzoleni 2008b; Geden 2007). In *education*, the SVP uses exclusionist codes not only in the vertical but also the horizontal dimension. Not only does it attacks the “liberal” elite or the “feminist” or (too) “tolerant” education system in the tradition of “1968” but it also scandalizes immigrants for the allegedly poor quality at public schools (e.g. weak language skills; violent behavior etc.). Furthermore, the populist radical right relies on a temporal narrative, contrasting earlier, allegedly peaceful periods for an integrated Swiss “community” with a grim projection of the future. As we know from social differentiation theory and the theory of “boundary-making”, this coupling of several forms of exclusion (segmentary/horizontal, stratificatory/vertical, temporal) is a strong indicator for an essentialization of boundaries (Wimmer 2008; Imhof 2011).

This populist (discursive) strategy is also apparent in other issue fields where the SVP manages to claim most attention. Especially in coverage on elections to the national government, the SVP repeatedly calls for more representation in the seven-member government, but only to its own conditions. It threatens other mainstream parties to elect only the candidate the SVP itself holds most suitable and even denounces (and later expels) its own slightly liberal minister (disrespectfully calling him “half a Councilor”). In other countries

with different political cultures and thus a different understanding of what constitutes a scandal (Esser/Hartung 2004), this might just be considered as regular and even necessary political practice. But in Swiss political culture where politics should be conducted in a 'concordant', consensus mode, these regular attacks by the SVP are conceived as a norm violation. Again, taboo-breaking leads to strong reactions and high media attention. The same is true in communication events with a strong critique of (state) institutions (e.g. in the revision of the constitution of the canton Zurich; scandal about a federal prosecutor whose wrongdoings allegedly were covered up by Justice Minister and SVP Federal Councilor Christoph Blocher). Again, the SVP is criticized for breaking the consensus and treating political institutions and opponents disrespectfully. At the same time, the SVP uses this critique as an example of how the "elite" tries to silence the SVP.

Finally, Table 2 also shows that, when the media focus on political parties per se (party communication events), again the SVP takes the lead, followed by the Liberal Democrats. This means that the media focus most on the development and the (inner) workings of the SVP, for example the role of Christoph Blocher in the party or the internal strife which led to the expulsion of several SVP politicians and the founding of a new party. Comparing this with the high attention to the FDP, one can see from election analyses that the reputation given to these two parties is remarkably different (Udris/Lucht/Imhof 2008). Media coverage of the SVP is regularly critical, as the positions advocated by the SVP are rejected. But while the social reputation of the SVP is low, the functional reputation of the party is not. Media coverage of the SVP includes a lot of 'strategy' frames or "metacoverage" (Esser/D'Angelo 2006) to expose the political marketing of the SVP; this way, the SVP is ascribed a role as a highly active, successful and effective player in the political contest. On the other hand, media coverage of the liberal-democratic FDP generally paints a gloomy picture of a formerly grand party now in rapid decline, utterly failing with its political campaigns.

All in all, several indicators then point at the fact that, in Switzerland, it is clearly the populist radical right SVP, which dominates the news and the political contest. It has first managed to reconfirm its issue ownership in highly salient issue fields such as 'identity politics' and 'law and order', second it is the party which most often claims new and free-floating issues, and, third, it is the party that most often 'trespasses' other parties' issues. In sum, then, the SVP is both the most active actor and the actor that the media and other political actors most often refer to and see (most often) as a powerful threat. Whether the media and other political actors intend it or not, they create a picture where the SVP is considered the most effective actor. Thus, the SVP still manages to shape the news.

### ***Media populism and political populism***

As we argue and formulate in hypothesis 3, this populist discursive strategy of the SVP finds so much media attention because it especially well fulfills the media logic regarding personalization (Blocher), scandalization and moralization (norm-violations etc.), and the simple, complex-reduced dramatization of conflict (SVP vs. "rest"). In order to support this assumption, we now turn to different press types which we expect to be shaped by media logic to a differential degree. The resulting media populism is measured with the salience of 'soft news' in a stricter sense (i.e. human interest, sports) and with the attention to issues in the field of identity politics and 'law and order'. It is then compared with the media attention awarded to the SVP.

Looking at the media agendas for each press type separately, the picture is mostly clear. As for how much human interest and sport is covered in the press, not surprisingly the tabloid daily devotes to these kinds of news most attention (26.4%) compared to other press types such as mid-market and quality papers (Table 3). Also, the mid-market and quality Sunday papers, each published by the same organization that owns a mid-market and quality daily, respectively, offer more soft news than their more serious daily 'parent papers', which is not surprising given the stronger commercial pressures (cf. above). At the same time, the importance of intermedia competition becomes apparent in the case of the Sunday tabloid: as it fights for at least a share of the same audience than do the other more 'serious' Sunday papers, it focuses less on soft news than its daily counterpart.

### **[Table 3 around here]**

The same pattern emerges when we look at the importance of issues of identity politics and 'law and order' within coverage of the most salient policy issues. The tabloid *Blick*, for instance, devotes around 25% of its coverage to these issues, while the salience of these issues in the quality *NZZ* is only 14%, while more issues on economic policy or infrastructure come into focus. Similarly, the Sunday paper *SonntagsZeitung* devotes more attention to these issues than does its daily counterpart *Tages-Anzeiger* and, again, the Sunday tabloid gives a little bit attention to these issues than the tabloid daily. Thus, apart from the focus on soft news (in the sense of human interest, sports), attention to identity politics and 'law and order' is another valid indicator measuring media populism.

If we now look at the media attention to the populist radical right, the picture becomes a little less clear. The fact that the SVP finds most media attention in all media types also indicates it has become so powerful and dominant in Swiss politics that not even quality papers can ignore it. But on the whole the findings support the main argument and hypothesis 3. The more quality-oriented press types tend to give less attention to the SVP: the SVP receives 'only' 28% of the party resonance in the *NZZ* but 30.5% in the tabloid *Blick*. These differences seem small but we have to keep in mind that our method (automatic keyword search, counting a party once per article whether it is mentioned one or several times) is better geared at explaining differences among different issue types than at explaining an 'overall' media attention where differences are leveled out to a certain degree. With these remaining differences, we see that those press types that focus on soft news, identity politics and 'law and order' devote especially large attention to the SVP. One case that does not nicely fit into the picture is the Sunday tabloid, which shows the lowest values compared to the other papers. Apart from the intermedia competition explanation above, another explanation lies in the fact that the Sunday tabloid generally covers policy issues relatively little (where the SVP indeed finds large attention), while the salience of election issues is much higher (where attention is more evenly spread among the parties). But to sum up, commercialized media overall display a higher degree of media populism, which gives political populists, above all the PRR, high media attention.

## Discussion and conclusion

This paper took the important role of the populist radical right (PRR) in Western democracies as a starting point. Scholars so far have focused mainly on the emergence and insurgent phase of populist radical right parties, showing that the interplay of media populism and (right-wing) populism has contributed to the PRR's success (Mazzoleni 2008b). However, little attention has been paid to the PRR once it has established itself and which role the media play in this phase. In order to find out if the PRR (still) shapes the news, we looked at news coverage in the established phase of the PRR, focusing on the salience of various political communication events and issues and the media attention political parties receive. On the basis of a broad database including six German-speaking Swiss newspapers from 2002 to 2009 capturing around 80'000 news articles, we showed that the populist radical right clearly finds most attention in the media, not only overall but also in a variety of issue fields. At least for the Swiss case, this gives us fewer reasons to assume that established populist actors become disenchanted and experience less media attention. Apart from this descriptive finding, we proposed to distinguish several types of communication events and issues when measuring party attention. This method helped interpret media attention in relation to the positioning of a party and the party strategies, whether in the case of (assumed) issue ownership resulting from established cleavages or in the form of the claiming of new issues or trespassing of the issues belonging to political opponents.

Our analysis thus contributes to the general question whether political-institutional factors or media factors in combination with party strategies shape the news. We did find strong indications that political factors are important for the amount of media attention (political cleavages; direct democracy). In line with findings from research on political cleavages, certain parties are clearly associated with those issues that match most closely their ideological underpinning, such as migration in the case of the populist radical right or welfare in the case of the Social democrats. Also, direct democracy (e.g. initiatives) is a specific political opportunity structure which can be used by political actors to stress their 'own' issue: generally, popular votes increase the likelihood that at least a certain output of news articles is produced just by the mere process alone. Understanding financial resources both as party-internal and political-institutional factors (i.e. low regulation of campaign financing), we can see that it is exactly the populist radical right which in Switzerland invests most resources in political campaigns before popular votes, and especially on the issues of Europe and migration (Hermann 2012). This way, direct democracy not necessarily serves as a tool for non-established civil-society actors but it can be used by the now-established PRR with strong financial resources to both influence legislation in the field of 'identity politics' and to set its main issues on the media agenda.

Apart from these political factors, then, there are also strong indications pointing at the importance of media factors in combination with party strategies. For issue ownership is dynamic and constantly needs to be (re)confirmed in the media. Also, the observation made for multi-party systems, namely that a high number of issues are "free-floating", was confirmed in the Swiss case. This underlines the importance to understand the political contest in a discursive context and to look at both the strategies political actors use to claim these issues and the logic with which the media address these issues and actors. In these free-floating issues, it was most often the right-wing populist SVP who manages to

successfully claim these issues. Furthermore, not only does the SVP stick to its 'own' issues such as migration or Europe, which is well-expected according to the literature on political campaigns (e.g. Hänggli/Kriesi 2010), but it also 'trespasses' political opponents' issues and claims new issues such as media policy or education, expanding the scope of its core messages and exclusionist, populist frames pitting itself (and the people it claims to represent) against the political elite and against foreigners. As political opponents and the media acknowledge this 'unique' positioning of the SVP, they, intentionally or not, contribute to this conflict line of 'SVP versus the rest'. Thus, the political narrative that the SVP itself uses becomes established and entrenched in Swiss political culture. This also means that the SVP has become large (and successful) enough to use both strategies of sticking to its 'own' successful issues and trespassing and claiming others – a strategy hardly viable to smaller parties (Walgrave et al. 2009: 170; Wagner 2011). The results of this paper furthermore indicate that this political populism benefits from media populism. Distinguishing different press types confirms this expectation, as the tabloid press and the tabloidized Sunday papers devote more attention to issues of identity politics and law and order and the PRR itself. Importantly, it is exactly those media types that have been finding a larger audience in Switzerland in the last decades, as especially the mid-market and quality press has been suffering from sinking circulation rates and advertising revenues. Thus, media opportunity structures are and most likely will be favorable for political populism in the years to come.

It is clear that this study is only a first step towards analyzing the *mechanisms* of the interplay of media populism and political populism. Unfortunately, literature using an input-output design for case studies on political campaigns and frame-building merely captures which frames are used by actors and which of these frames are ignored or amplified by the media. But it would be important to examine the character of the frames, i.e. whether certain frames per se trigger attention because they better fit the media logic. Some studies address this shortcoming by including journalistic frames such as "contest frames" or "conflict frames" apart from "advocacy frames" (e.g. Hänggli/Kriesi 2012; Gerth et al. 2012). However, conflict frames are not the most important frames for political actors, which need to stress advocacy frames to convey their messages. Thus, in order to explain why certain core frames of political actors find large media attention (while others do not), more research is needed that would systematically analyze and classify parties' advocacy frames regarding their degree of populism, e.g. to what extent these frames are rigid, exclusionist, provocative and show a low level of justified and civil argumentative sophistication (cf. Wessler 2008). Thus, in line with de Vreese's call to examine more closely the "interplay between advocacy frames and journalistic frames" (de Vreese 2012: 369), research should check whether, and why, these populist advocacy frames, in combination with conflict frames, are much more readily picked up by the media than non-populist advocacy frames. Smaller case studies point in this direction in that they also take into account the dynamics of a campaign and indicate how the SVP manages to drive the news with its (provocative) frames and how the media help dramatize the conflict the party itself tries to (re-)create (Ettinger 2010; Udris et al. 2007). Apart from using the tools of direct democracy (launching an initiative in the election year) and the highest financial resources of all Swiss parties, the SVP instrumentalizes the immigration issue in provocative political ads – textbook cases of successful campaigning taking into account the interplay between "paid media" and "free media" (Udris/Imhof/Ettinger 2011). Generalizing and stigmatizing foreigners with provocative ads not only serves to tap

into the fears of “modernization losers” (the core constituents of the SVP), whose negative emotions towards immigrants are increased by this advertising (Schemer 2010). Given the taboo-breaking character in the context of the rise of universal human rights (e.g. antiracism) (Koopmans et al. 2005; Maissen 2005), it also serves to provoke strong counter-reactions in the media and thus ‘free’ media attention.

If it has become relatively easy for a right-wing populist party to use large financial resources, direct democracy and the media logic to its advantage even in a highly prosperous, politically stable, democratic country such as Switzerland, one would have to investigate more deeply the populist challenges to democracy in a cross-comparative perspective. For Western European countries, especially the (small) democratic-corporatist states with similar transformations not only of social structure and political culture but also the media system, it becomes necessary to examine whether quality media (and partially the mid-market papers), which still serve as a ‘corrective’ during moralistic news waves by increasing the rationality of debate, can still foster in competitive media markets and to what extent quality and mid-market media (have to) adapt their content to the new media logic from which political populists would benefit. Political culture in a given country might aggravate certain forms of populism (e.g. lower chances in Germany for the populist radical right given its stigmatization resulting from Germany’s historical legacy) (Mudde 2007: 243-248) but these ‘obstacles’ to populism are not self-evident and constantly require reasonable public debate – and the scholarly attention to which other factors further facilitate and inhibit the interplay of media populism and political populism.

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**Bio**

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**Table 2: Parties and types of communication events**

	SVP		SP		FDP		CVP		GP		all parties	expected issue ownership	actual dominance	type of issue ownership
	attention	emphasis	attention	emphasis	attention	emphasis	attention	emphasis	attention	emphasis				
Parties and institutions														
Elections Executive (national)	27%	0.9	21%	0.9	23%	1.0	22%	1.3	7%	0.8	6581	free	SVP	claiming
Elections Executive (cantonal)	27%	1.0	18%	0.8	23%	1.0	19%	1.1	14%	1.7	2992	free	SVP	claiming
Elections Executive (local)	24%	0.9	25%	1.1	24%	1.0	15%	0.9	12%	1.5	1388	free	SP	claiming
Elections Parliament (national)	27%	0.9	22%	1.0	23%	1.0	18%	1.1	10%	1.3	7428	free	SVP	claiming
Parties	35%	1.2	17%	0.7	28%	1.2	16%	0.9	4%	0.5	4280	N/A	SVP	focus
Critique of Institutions	32%	1.1	20%	0.9	24%	1.1	17%	1.0	7%	0.8	2580	free	SVP	claiming
Policy issues														
Europe	35%	1.2	23%	1.0	23%	1.0	15%	0.9	3%	0.4	809	SVP	SVP	stable
Migration	44%	1.5	18%	0.8	19%	0.8	15%	0.9	5%	0.6	4680	SVP	SVP	stable
law & order	27%	1.0	26%	1.1	20%	0.9	18%	1.0	8%	1.0	2600	SVP / SP	SVP	partially stable
Education	30%	1.1	23%	1.0	23%	1.0	17%	1.0	7%	0.9	866	free	SVP	claiming
Ethics	23%	0.8	23%	1.0	19%	0.8	24%	1.4	12%	1.4	847	CVP	CVP	partially stable
Health Care	19%	0.7	32%	1.4	24%	1.1	20%	1.1	4%	0.5	1844	SP	SP	stable
Welfare	24%	0.9	28%	1.2	24%	1.1	17%	1.0	6%	0.7	4196	SP	SP	stable
Regulation Financial Sector	24%	0.9	29%	1.2	26%	1.1	15%	0.9	6%	0.7	1065	SP / FDP	SP	partially stable
Taxes	29%	1.0	28%	1.2	22%	0.9	17%	1.0	5%	0.6	1831	free	SVP	claiming
Economy / Economic Policy	24%	0.8	25%	1.1	24%	1.0	19%	1.1	8%	1.0	1236	FDP	SP	trespassing
Budget	28%	1.0	24%	1.0	24%	1.0	17%	1.0	8%	0.9	2345	FDP	SVP	trespassing
Infrastructure	25%	0.9	27%	1.2	22%	1.0	17%	1.0	9%	1.1	4281	free	SP	claiming
Environment	23%	0.8	18%	0.8	31%	1.3	14%	0.8	15%	1.8	1419	GP	FDP	trespassing
Energy	20%	0.7	29%	1.3	22%	1.0	12%	0.7	17%	2.1	1146	free	SP	claiming
Army	36%	1.3	25%	1.1	17%	0.8	12%	0.7	10%	1.2	1421	SVP	SVP	stable
Agriculture	40%	1.4	16%	0.7	18%	0.8	18%	1.1	8%	1.0	373	SVP	SVP	stable
Media Policy	28%	1.0	24%	1.1	26%	1.1	16%	0.9	5%	0.6	197	free	SVP	claiming
Culture	23%	0.8	31%	1.3	24%	1.0	11%	0.7	11%	1.3	353	SP	SP	stable
Other	25%	0.9	25%	1.1	22%	1.0	14%	0.8	14%	1.7	2795	N/A	SP	N/A
TOTAL	28.4%		22.9%		23.0%		17.3%		8.3%		59553			

*n1 = 59'553 instances (number of party mentions); n2 = 75'351 articles; April 2002 – December 2009*

**Table 3: Media populism and attention to the PRR**

	Average	Tabloid Daily	Mid-Market Daily	Quality Daily	Sunday Tabloid	Sunday Mid- Market	Sunday Quality
human interest / sport	11.0%	26.4%	4.1%	2.7%	20.2%	7.4%	5.0%
Policy issues:							
identity politics / law & order	19.9%	24.6%	18.7%	14.4%	21.2%	21.4%	19.0%
Attention to SVP	28.9%	30.5%	28.0%	28.0%	27.8%	29.6%	29.4%

*n1 = 60'490 instances (attention to political parties); n2 = 81'468 articles (including human interest/sport). We looked at the media agenda of each press outlet for this analysis instead of using an 'overall' press agenda (cf. above); this is why the numbers of articles and instances diverge from those used in Table 2. Also, as tabloid and Sunday papers are here better represented (given their lower article volume), the average share of attention to the SVP is 0.5% higher than the 'total' share depicted in Table 2.*